

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 190398
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY

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FOR AMBASSADOR HOLDRIDGE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:SREF

SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEE BOAT CASES: APPROACHES TO
COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM

1. SUMMARY. U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL'S REFUGEE PAROLE
ANNOUNCEMENT PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR HIGH-LEVEL APPROACH
SEEKING MORE LIBERAL ATTITUDE BY GOS TOWARD BOAT CASES.
POSSIBLE DRAFT LETTER TO PM LEE FROM SECRETARY FORWARDED
FOR COMMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AUGUST 11 MADE A DETERMINATION TO
PAROLE INTO THE UNITED STATES 15,000 INDOCHINESE, INCLUDING
7000 BOAT CASE REFUGEES. HIS DETERMINATION SHOULD LIGHTEN
REFUGEE PRESSURES IN COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM. IT PROVIDES
THE BASIS FOR A RENEWED APPEAL TO EXTEND HOSPITALITY TO
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PAGE 02 STATE 190398

BOAT CASE REFUGEES.

3. THE PRESIDENT, KEY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, THE PRESS, AND
THE GENERAL PUBLIC HAVE EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN OVER THE
PLIGHT OF THE BOAT CASE REFUGEES. ACCOUNTS OF EXTENSIVE
SUFFERING AND LOSS OF LIFE REACHED A CRESCENDO IN JUNE
AND JULY. THEY CENTERED ON SHIPS AT SEA THAT PASSED UP

REFUGEES IN DISTRESS, AND ON COUNTRIES AROUND THE PERIPHERY OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA THAT FORCED BOATS BACK OFFSHORE, OR REFUSED TO ALLOW TO DEBARK IN THEIR PORTS THOSE REFUGEES THAT SHIPS HAD ALREADY RESCUED. THERE IS MUCH MORE DOMESTIC CONCERN OVER THE ISSUE THAN DURING THF ,97L REQUEST FOR THE EXPANDED PAROLE PROGRAM.

4. SOME COUNTRIES OF TRADITIONAL IMMIGRATION ARE CONTINUING OR EXPANDING THEIR EFFORTS. FRANCE HAS AVERAGED ABOUT 1000 INDOCHINESE REFUGEES PER MONTH SINCE MAY 1975. AUSTRALIA HAS JUST ESTABLISHED A REFUGEE OFFICE IN BANGKOK. AUSTRALIA, IN ADDITION TO THE SOME 3000 INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IT HAS ALREADY TAKEN IN, PLANS TO ADMIT 150 PER MONTH FOR AT LEAST A YEAR STARTING IN SEPTEMBER 1977. NEW ZEALAND ANNOUNCED JULY 16 THAT IT WOULD SHORTLY ACCEPT UP TO 70 FAMILIES, OR SOME 420 INDIVIDUALS (REF B). CANADA, WHICH HAS ALREADY TAKEN IN SOME 7000, RECENTLY INFORMED THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES THAT IT WOULD ACCEPT 450 MORE. THE UNITED STATES, WHICH HAS ABOUT 146,000 IN COUNTRY, WILL TAKE 8000 FROM THAI CAMPS, IN ADDITION TO 7000 BOAT CASE REFUGEES.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY HAS PREVIOUSLY RECOMMENDED A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY TO PM LEE ON MORE LIBERAL GOS POLICY TOWARD BOAT CASES. UNLESS THIS IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 STATE 190398

CONSIDERED INADVISABLE, YOU MAY WISH TO RECOMMEND SUITABLE LANGUAGE FOR SUCH A LETTER, DRAWING PERHAPS UPON DRAFT CONTAINED IN PARAGRAPH 7 AND YOUR OWN SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL SITUATION AND PM LEE'S PERSONALITY. IF YOU PREFER NOT TO HAVE PERSONAL MESSAGE, PLEASE MAKE A DEMARCHE AT APPROPRIATELY HIGH LEVEL OF GOS.

6. APPROACHES BEING MADE BY USG TO OTHER FIRST ASYLUM COUNTRIES AND CONCURRENT DEMARCHES REQUESTED OF AUSTRALIA, CANADA, DENMARK, FRANCE, AND NEW ZEALAND.

7. DEAR MR. PRIME MINISTER:

ON AUGUST 11, U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL MADE LEGAL DETERMINATION PAROLE INTO U.S. 15,000 INDOCHINESE REFUGEES INCLUDING 7000 WHO SOUGHT FREEDOM BY FLEEING IN BOATS. PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER, KEY MEMBERS OF US CONGRESS, THE PRESS AND AMERICAN PUBLIC HAVE EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN OVER THE PARTICULAR PLIGHT OF THE BOAT REFUGEES. ACCOUNTS OF EXTENSIVE SUFFERING AND LOSS OF LIFE BASED IN PART ON A DECLINE IN AGE-OLD HUMANITARIAN TRADITION OF RESCUE AT SEA HAVE BECOME A MATTER OF GLOBAL AS WELL AS PACIFIC CONCERN.

THE U.S. UNDERSTANDS FULLY THAT STATES ON PERIPHERY
OF SOUTH CHINA SEA FACE UNIQUE PROBLEMS IN RECEIVING AND
ACCOMMODATING REFUGEES FOR WHAT HAVE APPEARED TO BE
INDETERMINATE PERIODS. THE NEW UNITED STATES PROGRAM
(ALONG WITH THOSE BEING CONTINUED CONCURRENTLY BY FRANCE,
AUSTRALIA, DENMARK, NEW ZEALAND AND CANADA) REFLECTS OUR
AWARENESS OF THESE SPECIAL CONCERNS AND SHOULD ENABLE
COUNTRIES WHICH BECOME AN AREA OF FIRST ASYLUM BY CIRCUM-
STANCE TO OFFER HOSPITALITY WITHOUT NECESSARILY ACCEPTING
A PERMANENT AND TOTAL OBLIGATION.

I THUS HOPE, MR. PRIME MINISTER, THAT THIS NEW
OPPORTUNITY WILL PERMIT YOUR GOVERNMENT TO JOIN WITH US
IN AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO EASE CONDITIONS OF HUMAN
DISTRESS AND MISERY REPRESENTED BY THE REFUGEES.
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PAGE 04 STATE 190398

SINCERELY, CYRUS VANCE. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 11-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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